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grateful silence, affording, as it does, a suggestive hint of what, at all events, might and ought to be the truth. But the fact remains that a very large number of Americans have published accounts of their observations in Palestine, too large to be separately mentioned here. In a subsequent number of this journal, an attempt will be made to give a bibliographical list, embracing books and review-articles by Americans, on subjects connected with biblical research, as well as to complete our account of American explorers by noticing what our countrymen have done to help the work in Egypt and Assyria.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

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MARCH 13. JACOB AT BETHEL. Gen. XXVIII. 10-22.

Is this narrative repeated in Gen. xxxv. with such contradictions as to prove that one or both are legendary and untrue? This narrative seems to affirm that Jacob, at the time of the incident recorded, called the name of the place Bethel; and this view of the case is taken in Gen. xxxi. 13 and xxxv. 1, 8, where the place is called Bethel, not by the writer, but by God, or by Jacob, speaking at a particular date. On the occasion of the incident, also, this narrative says that Jacob set up one of the stones of the place as a memorial-pillar, and anointed it. Is it a thing too absurd for belief that many years later, after passing through great changes, keeping still in mind the spiritual experiences he had here felt, he should have deliberately returned to the place, offering solemn worship here, renewing the name Bethel, and again setting up and anointing a memorial-pillar of stone? See Gen. xxxv. 7, 14, 15. To me it seems not at all absurd, but something very true to experience. I find, therefore, no reason for denying the historicity of either account, and thus far, none for assigning the two accounts to different sources of information, and certainly none for regarding the 'odh, xxxv. 9, as a lame attempt, by an editor, to harmonize two conflicting stories.

It is the *place* that is called Bethel, in each account, and not necessarily the neighboring city; that continued to be known as Luz, till after Joshua's time, when a fugitive from it built the Luz in the land of the Hittites, Judg. i. 22-26. In the circumstances, the city may very likely have been known by both names. From Gen. xxviii. 19 and xxxv. 6 (but compare xlviii. 3), it may be plausibly conjectured (not inferred, properly speaking) that the accounts were written in their present form after the fall of the Canaanite Luz, and the building of the other,—within the life-time of the public men who were associated with Moses.

Formerly it was held that Jacob's six years of service with Laban for cattle followed immediately after his fourteen years of service for his two wives, and that he was therefore about seventy-six years old, when he left Isaac; but this involves, by necessary inference, quite a list of absurdities. It is for the interest of men who wish to prove Genesis to be unhistorical to insist upon this interpretation, but it cannot fairly be maintained. Many now teach that an interval of twenty years occurred between the two terms of Jacob's service, and that he was therefore fifty-six years old at leaving Beer-sheba. I know of no solid foundation

for this *twenty*; but I suppose it is safe to assert that the accounts require us to hold that there was a long interval between the two terms. Jacob was between forty and seventy-six years of age at starting; the account of the births of Leah's children proves that he must have been considerably younger than seventy-six; that of the birth of Benjamin that he must have been considerably older than forty.

Especially as interpreted in the light of his subsequent career, Jacob's experience at Bethel is seen to be, at best, not that of a thoroughly sanctified man. Comparing Gen. xxviii. 16-22 with Gen. xxxii. 9-12, we find in the latter a consciousness of ill-desert, a gratitude for mercies received, a dependence on divine grace, which do not appear in the former. Jacob at Bethel was going into great temptations, and was about to be led very far astray; the experience at Bethel was given him that its influence might abide with him, and prevent his straying beyond return.

MARCH 20. JACOB'S NEW NAME. Gen. xxxii. 9-12, 24-30.

Is this account of the giving of the name Israel duplicated, with contradictions, in Gen. xxxv. 10? or are these two different incidents, as they purport to be? Is there anything violently incredible in the idea that Jehovah may have repeated at Bethel the blessing he had granted at Peniel? This is one of the thousand instances that are cited to prove that the Bible-narratives are not historically credible; but most of the thousand are as weak as this, for that purpose.

The central fact in this chapter and the next is that Jacob made to Esau the fullest restitution in his power for the wrongs he had formerly done him, in the matter of the birthright and the blessing. He and his whole family publicly and formally acknowledged that he had no claim to the birthright or the blessing, arising from those fraudulent transactions, and that Esau was still in lawful possession of the birthright, and was therefore lord, and Jacob servant, Gen. xxxii. 4, 5, 18, 20; xxxiii. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15. It is strange that so important a fact has been so generally overlooked, in treating of the life of Jacob. God had decreed, before the brothers were born, that Jacob should have the pre-eminence; in good time, God saw that the decree was executed; but as long as Jacob persisted in trying to execute God's purpose by fraud, for his own benefit, all his efforts proved failures; he had to abandon them, and make reparation for them, and leave the whole matter with God, that He might do as He saw fit, before he had any benefit from God's gracious purposes toward him.

The second section of the Sunday-school lesson is not an account of Jacob's continuing the supplication he had made in the first section. His attempt at reparation has brought him into great danger; he has prayed over that danger, and made his arrangements to meet it, and has left this whole matter in God's hands. But Jehovah, having secured Jacob's surrender in this matter of giving up his life-long sin, now wrestles all night with him to lead him to a complete and final self-surrender. As the day breaks, Jacob at last yields, and receives his new name.

The true rendering in verse 29 is, the revisers to the contrary notwithstanding, "for thou art a prince with God and with men, and prevailest." The idea of princely power is the one idea clearly found by Hebrew usage in the curiously mixed group of words here represented; it is not scientific to substitute for this, in three or four passages, an idea that fits less well, derived from a conjectural etymology. The point in regard to the new name is not that it gives renewed assurance of deliverance from the present danger from Esau, though such assur-

ance may be a fact ; it is that the new name represents a new character, in which character the man is to be a success, as he has been a failure in the old character represented by the old name.

APRIL 3. JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT. Gen. XXXVII. 23-36.

It is clearly possible to dissect this story into two parts, to imagine that the two parts were originally two separate and contradictory stories that have been pieced together,—one story representing that Potiphar was a eunuch, and the other that he had a wife ; one saying that the traders who sold Joseph were Midianites, and the other that they were Ishmaelites ; one story saying that his brother drew Joseph from the pit, but the other that this was done by Midianite traders. But it is also clear that the story, as it stands, is a perfectly clear, flowing, circumstantial narrative, which requires no dissection in order to account for it. So far as the passage by itself is concerned, scientific criticism is bound to accept the less complicated account of its origin.

In treating of the character of Joseph's brothers, it is to be hoped that our Sunday-schools, this time, will escape the stale gush that has sometimes been indulged in over these bad sons of a saintly old father. Jacob's wickedness to Esau had put him in shape so that he could not marry the woman he loved, except upon the humiliating terms exacted from him by her father. These circumstances had drawn him into polygamy, and into a life of habitual give-and-take fraudulent practices in his dealings with Laban, and had destroyed all the influence he might have had as an advocate, in his family and out of it, of the true religion. All his children, except Benjamin, were born of idolatrous mothers. All except Benjamin and Joseph were reared to maturity (Dinah seems to have been a young lady when they reached Palestine, see Gen. XXXIV.) under the influence of idolatry, domestic quarrels and fraudulent dealings with kindred. In the shameful conduct of his children, and all the misery it brought, Jacob reaped what he himself had deliberately sown. He had become a changed man in his old age, but that did not prevent the maturing of these bad harvests whose seed had already sprouted. Jacob would have avoided all these evils if he had reached in early life the decision he reached at Peniel.

It is sometimes alleged that these narratives concerning the patriarchs are incredible, if regarded as accounts of what occurred to individual men, and should therefore be regarded as semi-allegorical accounts of what occurred to peoples, or clans ; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for instance, not being persons, but impersonations of real or supposed facts in the history of Israel. As most of those who hold this view regard the history thus allegorically related as itself legendary and unhistorical, the distinction is not important for the purposes of apologetics. Probably there can be no objection to regarding some parts of Genesis as of the nature of a history of peoples or of movements, under the guise of a biography of persons, provided sufficient reasons for it can be adduced ; but generally speaking, the reasons alleged are not sufficient. The extraordinarily long lives of the patriarchs is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that the evident purpose is to represent them as a remarkably vigorous and long-lived stock. The accounts represent Esau, and by parity, Ishmael, Midian, Moab, Ammon, etc., as becoming heads of peoples, not purely by the process of lineal descent, but by alliances, and by acquiring personal influence among their neighbors. Remembering such facts as these, and following a common-sense interpretation of the accounts, most of them can be understood as being the personal biographies they seem on their face to be.